

Rhein-Main pays tribute to fallen comrades

**By Airman 1st Class
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Public Affairs**

National POW/MIA Recognition Day is a day in which military members and all United States citizens pay homage to, and recognize Americans who are prisoners of war and those who are still missing in action.

According to the Defense POW/MIA Office, as of July 31, 2001, there are 1,957 Americans still missing and unaccounted for in southeast Asia. That is down from 2,006 at this time last year.

POW/MIA Recognition Day is celebrated Sept. 21 this year, and just like in recent years, Rhein-Main has a number of events and tributes to support and promote awareness of POW's and those missing in action.

"The reason we have POW/MIA Day is to support those who sacrificed the ultimate to ensure the freedoms that we have with us today," said Tech. Sgt. Donald Anderson, coordinator of the Rhein-Main POW/MIA activities.

Kicking off the ceremonies is a POW/MIA tribute run Sept. 13-14. The run begins at 9 a.m. and continues for 24 hours. A minimum of two volunteers will run or walk with the POW/MIA flag around a designated course on base. Every hour the flag is passed to a different team of volunteers, keeping the flag moving for the entire 24 hours.

"Taking an hour out of the day to pay tribute to fallen comrades is a small, small price to pay for what they went through," said Tech. Sgt. Chris Hernandez, coordinator for the event. This event has nothing



to do with how fast people go, it is about getting the flag out and seen around base, he added.

Those interested in volunteering for the tribute can contact Hernandez at 330-7275.

A vigil to honor those still missing takes place outside of Bldg. 347 Sept. 17 from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Volunteers will read the names and ranks of those still missing for 10 minutes at a time. Col. Christine Prewitt, 469th Air Base Group Commander will be the first to participate.

Those interested in volunteering can contact Staff Sgt. Tammy Bean at 330-9002.

A POW/MIA memorial golf tournament takes place Sept. 19 at the Rheinblick golf course in Weisbaden. The cost is \$25, and all proceeds go toward POW/MIA related funds and the funding of the POW/MIA events on base. Call Sgt. Anderson at 330-6774 to sign up.

Rhein-Main holds a POW/MIA memorial luncheon Sept. 21, 11:30 a.m. at the Zeppelinhaus.

The guest speaker this year is Retired Air Force Col. Vernon L. Wright, the father of Major David Wright, deputy commander of the 726th Air Mobility Squadron.

Col. Wright flew F-80s and F-86s in Korea. He was shot down and held captive in a Chinese prison camp for 20 months. He later flew F-4s as the squadron commander of the 366th Tactical Fighter Squadron at DaNang Air Base, Vietnam. From 1971 - 1972, he flew a total of 158 combat missions over North Vietnam.

Those interested in attending the luncheon can contact Lt. Andrea Legg at 330-4624.

The week's events conclude Sept. 21, with a formal retreat ceremony outside of Bldg. 347 at 4 p.m. Those interested can contact Tech. Sgt. Mark Fritts at 330-7164.